

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE MUSEUM OF NORTH CRAVEN LIFE, SETTLE

The Folly

Item for publication in Door 2 Door Magazine

Mar 2007

The Folly in Settle is one of Craven's most historic buildings. Dating from 1679, it was built by Richard Preston, a wealthy merchant, for his own use. It is a strikingly original building and generally draws gasps of admiration from people when they turn the corner in High Street and see it for the first time. It is worth remembering that The Folly is situated on the old main road into Settle from Long Preston and that it was clearly designed to make an impact.

Everyone is always curious to know why the house is called 'The Folly'. We do not know the answer for certain, but it is certainly not because Richard Preston went bankrupt in the process of building it, as is sometimes suggested, since we know that he died a very wealthy man. A more likely explanation lies in the fact that, after Richard Preston's death in 1699, the house did not remain a gentleman's residence for long. It was sold to the Dawson family and shortly afterwards was divided up and let to a series of tenants for the next 250 years. Local people will remember that in fairly recent times part of the house was used as a bank and a doctors' surgery.

In the early 1990s, the house was put on the market and failed to find a buyer. At that point it was divided and the north range was sold separately. This end of the house remains in private ownership. The central and south ranges remained empty for nearly six years and were beginning to deteriorate. The house is Listed Grade I in recognition of its architectural importance and it was essential that the building was saved. At that point, North Craven Building Preservation Trust mounted a rescue campaign and secured a Heritage Lottery grant to buy the central and south ranges, with a view to opening them to the public. The following four years were spent in raising match-funding to enable the restoration of the building to go ahead. The Folly was finally able to open in May, 2001, just in time to provide an accessible tourist attraction in the area during the dreadful summer of foot-and-mouth disease.

Apart from its interest as a beautiful 17th-century house, The Folly is also home to the Museum of North Craven Life, which preserves and displays objects and photographs relating to the social history of the whole of North Craven. There is a permanent exhibition and then every year we mount special exhibitions on a variety of themes. For the 2007 season, there will be new displays to mark the centenary of Settle College (formerly Settle Girls High School), the 40th anniversary of Settle Orchestra and 'Elgar in Craven', to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth and his lifelong friendship with local doctor, Charles Buck. We shall open for the whole of the Easter weekend, from 6-10 April inclusive, 10.30 a.m.- 4.30 p.m., so do come along and enjoy a fascinating hour or more in a lovely place. We are always glad to arrange special openings for groups, so if you are responsible for organising a programme of visits for a particular society, please get in touch.

The Folly and Museum are run entirely by volunteers and we do not receive any revenue funding at all. This is why we make a modest admission charge of £1-50 for adults and £1 for concessions. Children are admitted free and season tickets are available for the benefit of

local people. We are sometimes criticised for not opening more often. We should love to be able to do this, but are dependent on being able to find enough volunteers to act as stewards. It is vitally important for the local economy that we provide good wet-weather attractions in North Craven and The Folly is one of these. Volunteering is very enjoyable and if anyone would like to find out more, we shall be delighted to hear from you. I can be contacted either by telephone (015242) 51388 or via our website at <http://www.ncbpt.org.uk/folly/>

[Ends]

For more information, please contact
Anne Read, Hon. Curator
Tel: (015242) 51388
E-mail: folly@ncbpt.org.uk
Web: <http://www.ncbpt.org.uk/folly>